

Colonel Jeremiah Y. Dashiell House
511 Villita Street
San Antonio
Bexar County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3169

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

COLONEL JEREMIAH Y. DASHIELL HOUSE

HABS No. TX-3169

Location: - 511 Villita Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

Present Owner
and Occupant: San Antonio Conservation Society.

Significance: Built in the mid-19th century, the Dashiell House was then one of the more pretentions houses in the Villita area of San Antonio and was, in general, characteristic of this type of dwelling. Today it is the only surviving example, a fact which increases its historic value. It is also significant as an example of vernacular architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Circa 1849.
2. Original and subsequent owners: There is confusion regarding the original ownership of the land on which the house at 511 Villita Street stands. The first transfer of this particular property appears to have occurred on November 1, 1834, when Guadalupe Ramona, by attorney, sold this land to Jose Maria Salinas for the sum of \$72. Described in the deed as "Bounded north and east by River of this City, west by the River and Pajalache Ditch, and south by principal street of that district", this property was further identified in Guadalupe Ramona's power of attorney executed September 22, 1834, as "a lot situated in that part of San Antonio known as La Villita." This property was referred to in both of the above legal instruments as being the land "found in the District of La Villita known by the name of Rechar" or "known as that of the late Rechar."

Now, this property purchased by Salinas in 1834, referred to as being once owned by "Rechar," may very well be the property that Salinas sought four years before. On February 16, 1830, Salinas petitioned for a grant of land "which years ago was occupied and owned by the foreigner Richard."

Documents in the Spanish Archives of Bexar County mention a "Richard Frances" or "Richard the Frenchmen" and state that he was one of the insurgents from which property was confiscated by the Government. This property was "a piece of land at the barracks, 20 varas front and depth to River." It is possible that "Rechar" and "Richard" are the same person, and it may also be that the property in question is that described immediately above.

On May 9, 1847, Refugio Amador, the only legal surviving heir of Jose Amador, sold this property which was described as "fronting fifty varas more or less on the Main Street of said 'Villita', bounded on the East by the street leading to the Missions, on the West by a lot, owner unknown, and on the North by the San Antonio River", to Parquin L. Buquor for the sum of \$65.

In the fall of 1847, Buquor sold this property to James W. Gray for the sum of \$75, but one year later Buquor purchased for \$250 one half of the property that he had sold to Gray. This lot was described as "being the Western portion of 50 varas front bought by me (Gray) of the said Jose Maria Salinas as per conveyance bearing date the day of _____ A.D., 1849 and being the same lot formerly owned by Richard and by his heirs conveyed to the said Salinas" and further, "the land being, lying and situated in La Villita, fronting 25 varas on the North side of the street running East and West from the mouth of the Acequi de los Pajalaches to the late residence of Vicente Micheli and running back to the River San Antonio, same width, bounded on the West by property of Jose Maria Salinas, South by the said street, East by the property of myself (Gray) and wife, and North by the San Antonio River. . . ."

The above reference given by Gray as to original ownership is confusing and perhaps indicates that the property ownership was in question. Gray "possessed" this property in 1848 but somehow did not make the actual transaction until the following year. On March 8, 1849, Jose M. Salinas sold to Gray for \$75 "that certain Solar or town lot Beginning 50 varas from the east line of my property and bounded on the East by property of Amador (Jose Amador), on the North by the San Antonio River, on the South by La Calle Real de la Villita, on the West by property owned by me, being the same lot for the past year possessed by said Gray having 50 varas front on said River San Antonio. . . ."

Salinas on March 30, 1849, sold the adjacent property adjoining on the west to Dennis Foutrel for \$125. This property was described as being in "that part of the City of San Antonio known as La Villita containing 32 varas front on the main street leading from the old ford of the San Antonio River, running back to said River (and bounded on the North by the River, on the West by) an alley leading from said Street to said River on the South by said main street and on the East by property occupied by P. L. Buquor," and further described as being the property conveyed to Salinas by Manuel Xemines, attorney in fact of Guadalupe Ramona.

To clarify the ownership of the above property that Buquor repurchased from Gray on September 7, 1848, F. Giraud, City Surveyor, made field notes and a plat of the Villita Street properties on September 20, 1848. The notes state that Buquor had purchased from Gray a lot with 25 varas front on Ford (Villita) Street and running

42 varas deep to the River. Giraud further noted that his survey conflicted on the west side 3 varas "with a lot calling for 32 varas front belonging at present to D. Foutrel." The property of Foutrel referred to was the 32 vara front purchased by him from Salinas and is the property on which the "Cos" house stands today.

The confusion in these transactions appears to stem from the original claim of Amador in 1847 to 50 varas of Villita Street property measured west from the Alamo Street corner. This claim overlapped that of Salinas who claimed approximately 80 varas measured east from the Callejon or alley, thereby creating an overlap of 50 varas. In any event, by 1849 the ownership was resolved and the property division from that time on is relatively certain. Beginning at the alley on Villita Street and going eastward, Foutrel owned the first lot, approximately 30 varas, Buquor owned the next adjoining lot, 25 varas front on Villita Street, and Gray owned the third lot, or remainder to the Alamo Street corner.

The property of Buquor is the lot that is pertinent to the subject at hand. As shown by the records cited above, Buquor is known to have possessed some claim to the property in 1847, and a definite claim to it by deed of September 7, 1848, and further that he "occupied" the lot in March, 1849.

On August 22, 1849, Buquor sold this property to J. Y. Dashiell for \$600 which was described as "fronting 25 varas on the North side of the street running East and West from the mouth of the Acequia de los Pajalaches to the residence of the late Vicente Micheli and running back to the River San Antonio same width bounded on the West by the property of Jose Maria Salinas now belonging to D. Foutrel, South by said street, East by property of J. W. Gray and wife and north by the San Antonio River. The subject of the transaction was "one certain house and lot" and it seems probable that Buquor was the builder of the house.

In 1858 Dashiell became bankrupt and owed \$10,318.22 to the Federal government. To satisfy part of the debt his property was sold at an auction for \$3,400 to Anthony Superviele on June 5, 1860.

On January 18, 1864, the property was sold to Auguste Morisset who held it until 1910 when the property was sold to Mrs. Edward Thomson, who held the property well into this century.

- B. Historical Context: Dashiell first came to San Antonio in April, 1849 as a member of General Worth's staff. He was born on September 23, 1804 in Baltimore, Maryland, the son of Reverend George Dashiell, the first rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Baltimore.

Following an early education in Newark, Delaware, Dashiell studied medicine with an uncle in Baltimore and graduated at the age of 19 from the University of Maryland. Shortly after his graduation he engaged in the practice of medicine in Louisville, Kentucky, for a number of years. He was one of the founders of the Louisville Medical College, where he

served as a professor during his residence there. Later he practiced medicine in Princetown, Mississippi. Dashiell was appointed Paymaster of the United States Army by President Polk in July, 1846, at the outbreak of the Mexican War. He proceeded to Mexico, and there served actively until the end of the war when he came to San Antonio.

Dashiell is known to have lived in this house in 1858 the same year he was dismissed from service, but by 1860 he resided elsewhere. At that time he was bankrupt.

During the Civil War, Dashiell served as Adjutant General on Governor Lubbock's staff. In 1870 Dashiell purchased one-third interest in the San Antonio Herald Newspaper and Printing Establishment and became editor of the Herald during the trying years of Reconstruction. Dashiell died March 14, 1888.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The house as an example of vernacular architecture has a two-room arrangement connected by a pair of large sliding doors which are on the front south elevation.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is well maintained and in very good condition.

B. Description of Interior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-story structure measures 38'-2"x 42'-9", including the front porch. The bays across the front south elevation number four. The house is nearly square in layout.
2. Foundations: Probably rubble limestone laid in lime mortar.
3. Walls: Dressed face rubble limestone laid in lime mortar and coated with stucco of smooth sand finish, presently painted light yellow.
4. Structural system: Load bearing masonry walls. First floor: 10"x 3" rough-surfaced beams at from 8'-0" to 13'-8" on centers (seen from under porch). 2"x 10" rough joists at 24" on centers frame between the beams. The beams are mortised to receive tenons projecting at the ends of the joists. The first floor ceiling is framed with 2"x 8" rough joists at 24" on centers, and the rafters are of the same materials at the same spacing.
5. Porch: The front porch has tongue-and-groove wood flooring. The columns are boxed and appear to be recent. The two pilasters located at the two corners of the front facade are original and have classical molded antae caps. The balusters are small and are of square cross section with a round rail. The porch ceiling is also of tongue-and-groove. The steps are of modern, finished two by dimensions stock. The floor and ceiling are painted while box piers, railings, etc. are stained.

6. Chimneys: Two stuccoed chimneys are on the east and west walls flush with the wall. The material is limestone set in lime mortar.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Three are four framed doorway openings evenly spaced across the front facade. Wood architraves have simple classical molded trim. Doors are all double with molded bottom panel and glass lights above. Each doorway has an interior splay and a double screen door, added in recent years. On the basement front there are two doorways, centrally located, opening into the respective rooms of that floor.
 - b. Windows: Basement windows are inward opening casements. The central portion of the rear (north) wall of the house contains a screen wall of wood construction with modern wooden awning sash. Other windows are double-hung wood sash, 6/6, and they are possibly original.
8. Roof: The roof is hipped, sloped about 12:12. The roofing material is standing seam metal painted. The roof projection is slight; the rafters do not overhung.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: Entrance to the main (first) floor is through the south doors. This floor is divided north-south by a partition into two rooms. The south room takes up 2/3 of this floor, and has a wide doorway that connects to two symmetrical spaces. There are fireplaces on the end walls. The rest of the first floor is the north room with three small spaces. Two of these spaces have fireplaces on the end walls.

The basement plan follows the first floor.

2. Stairways: There are no interior stairways. Entrance to the interior is through the exterior stairway on the southwest side of the house.
3. Flooring: Pine, 1"x 6" tongue-and-groove on the upper; modern quarry tile and cement below.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are plastered on stone. The ceilings are of boards which run east-west for the first floor ceiling and north-south for the cellar ceiling. The north-south partition wall on the first floor is plastered masonry.
5. Doors: Two large sliding wood doors with six molded panels are located in the center of the north-south partition wall on the main floor. The two sets of double doors leading to the old

rear (north) gallery are identical to those across the front facade. Two wood doors permitting access to the small rear spaces are typical four panel, simple molded wood doors. All doorway openings are fully cased and have classical molded architraves.

6. Decorative features and trim: Three are wood baseboards and cove moldings in the house. Fireplace mantels are wood, extremely simple in design with simple moldings.
7. Hardware: There are pintel hinges, a type widely used before the Civil War and rarely afterward. The left door to the basement has a patterned brass or bronze knob.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: Originally by wood-burning fireplaces; now by unvented gas heaters.
 - b. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures, both fluorescent and incandescent.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south. It is located in the historic La Villita neighborhood, a several block area in downtown San Antonio consisting of a number of nineteenth century residences that have been restored and maintained as an historic neighborhood. It is set back slightly from Villita Street, the principal street of the neighborhood, and is on the bank of the San Antonio River which forms the northern boundary of the property.
2. Landscaping: The front "yard" has been paved with bricks in recent years leaving a planting bed along the line of the front gallery. A low rock wall separates the property from the public sidewalk and Villita Street. A parking area west of the house has been paved with bricks leaving planting beds flanking it along the west property line and along the west wall of the house. The rear yard has been terraced with brick retaining walls and iron fences which are of modern construction.
3. Outbuildings: The original one-story detached kitchen and two-story stable are no longer in existence.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed records, Bexar County Courthouse, San Antonio, Texas. A2/252; B2/66; F2/368-69; H1/151, 154, 307; H2/530; K1/216; 52/106-107.

Engineering records, Bexar County Courthouse, San Antonio, Texas.
Old City Surveyor's Plat Book I/20, 30.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Newspaper articles:

San Antonio Herald, May 4, 1858; August 31, 1865.

Prepared by: John C. Garner, Jr.
Director, Bexar County
Architecture Survey
and
Wesley I. Shank
Project Supervisor
1968, 1969

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The San Antonio project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in the summer of 1968, and was made possible with funds from HABS and two sponsors, the Bexar County Historical Survey Committee and the San Antonio Conservation Society. Under the direction of James Massey, chief of HABS, the project was carried out by Wesley I. Shank (Iowa State University), project supervisor, and by student assistant architects, Charles W. Barrow (University of Texas); Les Beilinson (University of Miami); William H. Edwards (University of Illinois); and Larry D. Hermesen (Iowa State University) at the HABS field office in the former Ursuline Convent buildings, San Antonio. John C. Garner, Jr., director of Bexar County Architecture Survey, did the outside work on the written documentaries. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written data in 1983, for preparation of transmittal to the Library of Congress. Dewey G. Mears of Austin, Texas took the documentary photographs of the San Antonio structures.